

Message Text

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21

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

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FM AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5800

INFO SECDEF WASHDC

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY OSLO

USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L THE HAGUE 2206

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, NL

SUBJ: SUCCESSOR TO F-104: CABINET DISCUSSION AND LABOR

PARTY DISSENSION

REF: THE HAGUE 2045

1. MINISTER DEFENSE VREDELING PRESEVTED HIS REPORT
RECOMMENDING THE F-16 AS SUCCESSOR TO THE F-104
TO THE REGULAR WEEKLY CABINET MEETING APRIL 25.
IT US UNDERSTOOD CABINET AS A WHOLE ENDORSED
VREDELING'S REPORT BUT THAT MINISTER FINANCE
DUISENBERG AND MINISTER ECONOMIC AFFAIRS LUBBERS
RAISED QUESTIONS IN CONNECTION WITH IT. MINISTER
FINANCE WAS CONCERNED ABOUT CURRENCY FLUCTUATIONS,
I.E., THAT VALUE OF DOLLAR WOULD INCREASE VIS-A-VIS
THE GUILDER, AND SAID THIS MATTER SHOULD BE RESOLVED
BEFORE CONTRACT WAS SIGNED.

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2. MINISTER ECONOMIC AFFAIRS LUBBERS RAISED MORE
SERIOUS QUESTION ON LABOR BENEFITS FOR NETHERLANDS
OF F-16 PROGRAM. REPORTEDLY HE SAID FOKKER AND
HOLLANDSE SIGNAALAPPARATAN, TWO OF THE LARGEST

POTENTIAL CO-PRODUCERS, BOTH BELIEVED THAT THEY WOULD RECEIVE SUBSTANTIALLY LESS WORK IF F-16 WERE SELECTED RATHER THAN MIRAGE. LUBBERS IS SAID TO HAVE PRESENTED PROJECTIONS BASED ON PRODUCTION OF 1100 MIRAGES AND 2000 F-16'S WHICH SHOWED MORE WORK FOR DUTCH FIRMS IN FORMER CASE. DUTCH AIRFORCE IS KNOWN TO QUESTION THESE FIGURES AND IS UNDERSTOOD TO BE PREPARING ALTERNATIVE PROJECTION FOR MIRAGE BASED ON PRODUCTION RUN OF 750 AIR-CRAFT.

3. DESPITE THESE CRITICAL COMMENTS, CABINET BELIEVED NEAR DECISION FOR F-16 ALTHOUGH NO FORMAL MOVE WILL BE TAKEN UNTIL AFTER MAY 3 MEETING WITH BELGIANS (REFTEL) AND FINAL CONSULTATION WITH DANES AND NORWEGIANS. (UNDERSTOOD THAT MINISTER DEFENSE VREDELING PLANS TRAVEL COPENHAGEN TO MEET WITH HIS COUNTERPARTS FROM DENMARK AND NORWAY RIGHT AFTER MEETING WITH BELGIANS). CABINET HAS SCHEDULED SPECIAL MEETING FOR MAY 6 FOR FINAL DECISION. MOST SERIOUS REMAINING PITFALL IS SPLIT BETWEEN LABOR PARTY AS A WHOLE AND THE LABOR PARTY MINISTERS IN CABINET, WHICH INCLUDE PRIME, DEFENSE, FOREIGN AFFAIRS, AND FINANCE MINISTERS.

4. F-104 SUCCESSOR WAS MAIN TOPIC FOR 21 MEMBERS LABOR PARTY EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING ON APRIL 28. A LARGE MAJORITY OF THE BOARD IS REPORTED TO HAVE COME OUT AGAINST SELECTION OF AIRCRAFT AS SOPHISTICATED AF F-16. VREDELING HAS ALREADY SAID HE WOULD RESIGN IF A MAJORITY OF THE LABOR PARTY'S GROUP IN PARLIAMENT WERE OPPOSED TO HIS DECISION. UNDER THE DUTCH SYSTEM OF MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY IT IS POSSIBLE FOR ONE MINISTER TO RESIGN UNDER PRESSURE OR EVEN BE REMOVED WITHOUT CAUSING THE CABINET TO FALL. HOWEVER, IN PRACTICE THIS IS RARE AND BREDELING'S RESIGNATION IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES COULD BRING FALL OF DEN UYL CABINET.

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5. COMMENT: PRIME MINISTER DEN UYL, AN ACKNOWLEDGED MASTER OF SPREADING OIL ON TROUBLED WATERS, WILL DO HIS BEST TO SOOTH THESE DISSENSIONS WITHIN HIS PARTY. HOWEVER, EVEN HIS DIPLOMATIC CAPABILITIES WILL BE TAXED AS THERE ARE LIKELY TO BE ADDITIONAL PRESSURES ADDING STRESS TO THE SITUATION. FOR ONE THING IT IS QUITE POSSIBLE THAT THE RADICAL PARTY (PPR), A JUNIOR MEMBER OF PRESENT COALITION WHICH HAS ALREADY COME OUT AGAINST PURCHASE OF F-16 MAY MAKE PRR CONTINUATION IN GOVERNMENT CONDITIONAL ON THE F-16 NOT BEING SELECTED. FOR ANOTHER, IT WOULD SEEM QUITE LIKELY THAT THE BELGIANS, IN THE EVEN THAT THEY OPT FOR THE AMERICAN AIRCRAFT, WILL ATTEMPT TO PLACE THE ONUS OF THE DECISION ON DUTCH

GOVERNMENT PRESSURE IN ORDER TO EASE THEIR
OWN DIFFICULT POLITICAL SITUATION. LABOR PARTY
OPPONENTS TO THE CHOICE ARE NOT LIKELY TO TAKE
KINDLY TO IDEA THAT THEIR OWN MINISTERS WERE
EXERTING SUCH PRESSURES ON NEIGHBORING BELGIUM.
GOULD

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